



NEWSLETTER

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS

SOUTH DAKOTA DEPARTMENT OF THE MILITARY



2021 REHABILITATION SERVICES GOVERNOR'S AWARDS

The South Dakota Board of Vocational Rehabilitation, Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired and the Statewide Independent Living Council are now accepting nominations for the 2021 Governor's Awards.

The Governor's Awards recognize South Dakotans for their contributions to the employment of people with disabilities.

The nomination categories are:

- Distinguished Service
- Outstanding Individual with a Disability
- Outstanding Employee with a Disability
- Outstanding Private Employer (Small Employer)
- Outstanding Private Employer (Large Employer)
- Outstanding Employer (Other)
- Outstanding Transition Services

Anyone is welcome to submit a nomination. Nomination forms can be found online at <https://dhs.sd.gov/rehabservices/govawards.aspx>.

For assistance, please contact Colette Wagoner at 605-494-3613 or by email-ing cwagoner@bhssc.org.

The deadline for submitting names for consideration is Friday, May 3.

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DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

MIDWEST HONOR FLIGHT FUNDRAISING EVENTS

Although all Honor Flights across the country have been suspended through June 2021, the Midwest Honor Flight continues their fundraising efforts. Included below are some of their upcoming events:

Culver's Day of Giving - Tuesday, March 23, 2021

Sixteen Culver's locations throughout the state of South Dakota, NW Iowa, and SW Minnesota are partnering together for Midwest Honor Flight. Throughout the day on Tuesday, March 23, these locations will be donating 10% of their sales for future flights as well as all donations collected at the counters. A Midwest Honor Flight Volunteer will be at each location from 5-8 PM to help answer any questions about their program or assist with the application process for veterans. Have Culver's make something fresh for you while supporting your local American Heroes! Visit any Culver's in the following locations to have your meal count: South Dakota: Aberdeen, Rapid City, Spearfish, Yankton, Mitchell, Sioux Falls | Iowa: Sioux City, Sioux Center | Minnesota: Marshall.

Sioux City Musketeers Military Appreciation – Sunday, April 11

Veterans get a free ticket for this game vs Omaha and others can be purchased through Midwest Honor Flight in advance for \$15 with proceeds going back to Midwest Honor Flight. In addition, there will be a live auction for the special jerseys the players wear for Military Night. Proceeds from the auction go to the Midwest Honor Flight. Gates open at 2:05 PM (CT) with the game time starting at 3:05 PM.

Honor Ride—Sioux Falls - Sunday, June 13 - 2:30 PM (CT) (Registration begins at 12:30 PM)

Join us in Sioux Falls for the first Honor Ride! Midwest Honor Flight wants to remember your loved ones while honoring all veterans, past, present, and future. Participants are encouraged to take along a picture of a veteran they wish to honor during the ceremony to ride along with them. Registration begins at 12:30 PM (CT) at the South Dakota Military Heritage Alliance in Sioux Falls. Honor a veteran you know and ride to raise funds for Midwest Honor Flight. The ride includes a slow salute past the Sioux Falls VA Hospital before an escort to the new South Dakota Veterans Cemetery. \$30 for each bike and driver, \$45 for a bike, driver, and a passenger. Registration fees are 100% deductible. Each participant will receive a MWHF patch and a raffle ticket. Event t-shirts can be pre-ordered as only a limited number of sizes and colors will be available on site. Visit www.midwesthonorflight.org/ride to register and for more information. Day of registration is an option.



MIDWEST HONOR FLIGHT

(CONTINUED)

Barrel House Day of Giving – Monday, August 23

The Barrel House will donate 10% of their total sales August 23 to Midwest Honor Flight! The Barrel House is located in Sioux Falls at 4701 East 54th Street. A representative from the Midwest Honor Flight will be present throughout the day.

2021 Hangar Dance – Saturday, October 23 (Tickets go on sale July 15)

Jump and Jive for the Midwest Honor Flight! The vintage singing trio, “The Satin Dollz,” will perform in concert in Sioux Falls at the third annual Midwest Honor Flight Hangar Dance! The “Victory Showtime” concert will feature popular tunes from the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s in the tradition of the Andrews Sisters, with voices and harmonies, choreography, and banter. This year’s event will again take place at the South Dakota Military Heritage Alliance located at 1600 W Russell Street in Sioux Falls. Visit www.midwesthonorflight.org/dance for tickets or additional information. You can also contact their hotline at (605)215-1319, Ext 0 to reserve a ticket (\$30 in advance, \$40 at the door).



Thank you to everyone that came!
We hope you will join us again on Saturday, October 23, 2021!

AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN PROVIDES VETERANS SEAMLESS COVID-19 PROTECTIONS AND AID

The American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act of 2021, signed into law March 11 by President Joseph R. Biden, Jr., equips the United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to ensure veterans have continued access to quality health care and protections against COVID-19, as well as providing needed economic relief.

The \$1.9 trillion coronavirus economic relief package for Americans allocates \$17 billion in support of VA's nationwide response to the pandemic.

"Like other hard-working Americans, veterans have been severely impacted by the coronavirus pandemic," said VA Secretary Denis McDonough.

"Countless veterans have lost jobs, closed businesses, home-schooled children, and faced uncertain prospects while our nation grapples with this health crisis. The American Rescue Plan is a significant piece of legislation that helps the VA deliver on the president's promise of caring for the men and women who served our great nation, especially during this unanticipated and challenging time."

Outlined for the VA in the American Rescue Plan are as follows:

- \$14.5 billion for COVID-19 related health care, including information technology and facility requirements, ensuring access for 9.2 million enrolled veterans who may have delayed care or have more complex health care needs as a result of the pandemic, as well as resources for Veterans currently receiving housing support and an estimated 37,000 homeless Veterans.
- \$1 billion for debt forgiveness related to copayments or other cost sharing veterans paid for VA health care and to reimburse veterans who paid a copay or other cost sharing, for care and prescriptions provided from April 6, 2020 through Sept. 30, 2021.
- \$750 million for both construction grants (\$500 million) and payments (\$250 million) to State Homes to greatly improve the living conditions of our most vulnerable veterans who reside in these facilities.
- \$386 million to initiate a COVID-19 Veteran Rapid Retraining Assistance Program that provides up to 12 months of training and employment assistance for unemployed veterans to enter high demand occupations.



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ARP (CONTINUED)

- \$262 million to reduce the backlog of compensation and pension claims, which has grown from 76,000 in March 2020 to more than 212,000 in March 2021. The ARP funding will enable the Veterans Benefits Administration to reduce the claims backlog to around 100,000 by September 2022.
- \$100 million to facilitate the modernization of the VA's badly antiquated supply chain system by accelerating the Department's transition to the Defense Medical Logistics Standard Support.
- \$80 million to establish the Department of Veterans Affairs Employee Leave Fund, which provides funds for paid leave for COVID-19 related causes.
- \$10 million to decrease the Board of Veterans' Appeals hearing requests (currently 87,499) and intake (35,000 appeals) backlogs. These efforts help veterans economically by resolving their VA appeals and allowing them to begin receiving compensation and services.

Additional American Rescue Plan support:

- Veterans experiencing unemployment and other financial hardships may also qualify for further assistance in the form of extension of unemployment insurance benefits and eligibility, stimulus checks, or expansion of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits.
- Veterans with children could benefit from additional stimulus payments, an increased child tax credit and expanded childcare tax credits.
- Veterans are prioritized for the \$28.6B Restaurant Revitalization Grants in the Small Business Administration's Restaurant Revitalization Fund. During the initial 21-day period in which the Small Business Administration (SBA) awards grants under this program, SBA will prioritize awarding grants to eligible entities that are owned and controlled by veterans.
- Helps small businesses in economically disadvantaged areas keep front line state and local public workers on the job and paid and help public transit agencies avoid layoffs and service reductions.
- Assists communities disproportionately impacted by the pandemic, many of which are veterans living in diverse communities across the country. Women and racial/ethnic minorities are becoming the fastest-growing populations of veterans, as the COVID-19 pandemic and corresponding economic crisis have hit communities of color and women particularly hard.
- Provides emergency funding for community investments to ease challenges experienced by many American Indian/Alaska Native Veterans and their families and provides much needed relief to embark on the long road to healing in the aftermath of tremendous losses during the pandemic.
- Closes what is known as the "90/10 loophole" to protect the integrity of the GI Bill and veterans in receipt of their well-earned educational benefits.

Click here to learn more about the [American Rescue Plan](#).

MESSAGE FROM SDDVA SECRETARY WHITLOCK

Recently Smart Asset™ named South Dakota as the top state for veterans in the nation. Much of this decision focused on veteran population, low unemployment rates, low housing costs, and access to healthcare facilities.

This recognition is great news, but it is not new to us! South Dakota has two remarkable VA Healthcare systems, nine Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOC) and hundreds of healthcare facilities who partner with the VA to provide care in the community.

South Dakota is a safe place to live and raise a family. We have no state income tax and we offer property tax exemptions for veterans with disabilities.

South Dakota awards a bonus for those who meet certain qualifications for active duty service.

For veterans wishing to grow their educational footprint, South Dakota exempts 12-month residency requirements, veterans can receive credit for military training when obtaining licenses, and there is no time limit on when

veterans have to use tuition benefits at South Dakota colleges and universities. Veterans also have the option to participate in apprenticeship programs and on-the-job-training programs.

South Dakota has federally accredited and state certified veterans service officers and county and tribal veterans service officers who are subject matter experts in federal VA law and provide claims and counseling advocacy for veterans and their families.

It is no surprise to us that South Dakota ranks as the best state for veterans to live and work. We are extremely proud of all who have honorably served our country over the centuries. Providing quality and effective service to veterans and their dependents is, and always will be, our number one mission. We draw on the rich history of American veterans and their unique contributions to our nation for inspiration and direction.



211 FINDING RIDES FOR COVID-19 VACCINE RECIPIENTS

The Helpline Center, in partnership with the South Dakota Department of Health, is excited to announce the launch of a new service that will provide free Lyft rides for individuals to their COVID-19 vaccine appointment.

"The Helpline Center is pleased to offer this critical service to high risk groups in South Dakota. We know that transportation is often a barrier to getting vaccinated and we are very appreciative of the partnership with South Dakota Department of Health to make this possible", said Janet Kittams, CEO of the Helpline Center.

Individuals in Aberdeen, Brookings, Pierre, Rapid City, Sioux Falls and Watertown (and those within 20 miles of any of these communities) are eligible for this free service. If someone doesn't have transportation access to their vaccine appointment and they fall within the Phase 1 priority group, they can simply call 211 and the Helpline Center staff will assist in the scheduling of a Lyft ride.

The vaccine appointment must already be scheduled and there is a maximum of four rides per person. Riders will be required to follow COVID-19 prevention protocols, such as wearing a face covering during the ride and sanitizing hands frequently.

If someone you know doesn't have the ability to get their COVID-19 vaccine due to a transportation concern, please call 211 today to get your free Lyft ride scheduled.



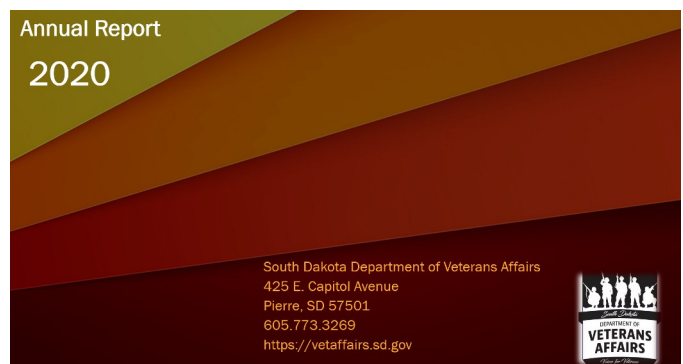
SDDVA 2020 ANNUAL REPORT

SDDVA's annual report provides information on the Department's mission and history and summarizes our achievements in the past year. The 2020 annual report can be found at:

<https://vetaffairs.sd.gov/publicaffairs/Other%20Publications/2020%20SDDVA%20annual%20report.pdf>

SDDVA is moving into the future with hope, enthusiasm, a renewed commitment, and hopes that 2021 will afford us more chances for outreach and more opportunities to meet face-to-face with our veterans.

Special thanks to all our partners for the role they played in our accomplishments.



UPCOMING EVENTS

Mar 19—Free Drop-In Legal Clinic—DAV—1519 W. 51st Street—Sioux Falls—9:00 am—3:00 pm (CT)

Mar 20—Free Drop-In Legal Clinic—VFW—520 Main Avenue—Brookings—9:00 am—3:00 pm (CT)

Mar 23—Culver's Midwest Honor Flight Fundraiser

Jun 14—Midwest Honor Flight Honor Ride—Begins at Military Heritage Alliance—Sioux Falls (1600 W. Russell Street)—Registration 12:30 pm (CT) and ride begins at 2:30 pm (CT)

June 24-27—American Legion State Convention—Huron

Aug 16-18—SDDVA Annual Benefits School—Ramkota Hotel—Pierre

Aug 23—Midwest Honor Flight Fundraiser at Barrel House—Sioux Falls (4701 E. 54th Street)

Oct 23—Midwest Honor Flight Hangar Dance at the South Dakota Military Heritage Alliance—Sioux Falls (1600 W. Russell Street)



HONOR RIDE
MIDWEST HONOR FLIGHT

"RIDING TO KEEP THEM FLYING"

Sunday, June 13, 2021 | 2:30 PM

Registration begins at 12:30 PM at the South Dakota Military Heritage Alliance. Honor a Veteran you know and ride to raise funds for Midwest Honor Flight. Ride includes a slow salute past the Sioux Falls VA Hospital before an escort to the new South Dakota State Cemetery.

MORE INFORMATION & PRE-REGISTRATION:
MIDWESTHONORFLIGHT.ORG/RIDE

Midwest Honor Flight is a 100% volunteer organization. All proceeds from this event go directly towards future Honor Flight and more importantly, our local Veterans.

Audry Ricketts, Public Information Officer

South Dakota Department of the Military <https://military.sd.gov/>

South Dakota Department of Veterans Affairs <https://vetaffairs.sd.gov>

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